

VILLAGES AND HOUSES

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This traditional arrangement of the Hill Maria villages is far from being always observed. I have seen a village constructed in this way on one of its traditional sites (*pagh* or *paghe'i*; Murias say *pare*, while Bison-horn Marias generally use the Halbi word *padar*), and then four years later found it reconstructed on one of the alternative sites with little sign of the traditional grouping; and I have also seen the converse occur. In fact, the configuration of the site may make the traditional arrangement difficult. It is also being gradually abandoned in the villages on the edges of the hills into which the individualism of surrounding plains villages is creeping, and in the few villages such as Orcha and Hikul which have good permanent rice cultivation; in the latter villages there is a growing tendency not to shift the sites when the surrounding *ponde* slopes are exhausted, but to cultivate even remote slopes from the village site in the vicinity of the permanent rice fields. As the old feeling of village community weakens, houses are no longer built as long-houses, each containing groups of three or four houses occupied by brothers or near paternal cousins, but are built detached, each with its own granary close to it, instead of the householder having one compartment in the long granary row; even then, however, the detached houses tend to group themselves roughly into lines flanking a central open space, at one end of which is the village dormitory (*gotul-lon*), in its usual position. Even when a village site is becoming permanent, as at Orcha and Hikul, any sudden calamity, such as crop failure, epidemic or epizootic, will probably induce the villagers to shift. In several villages the *karyag-gaika* always keeps a hen sitting on eggs inside his house, and the adding of an undue proportion of these is frequently a signal for the shifting of the village; but a wise *gaika* does not let his eggs get addled unless there is really sound economic or religious reason for shifting, when the omens can be made to suit the occasion.

Behind each line of houses will be found rows of pig-sties, at least one for each house; and the pigs often seem better housed than their masters. Where, as around Orcha, *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) or other timber is plentiful, the pig-sties are generally made of sections of tree trunk or large boughs laid horizontally between vertical stays, with an opening in front which can be closed by dropping vertical posts over it between horizontal stays at the top and bottom of the opening. These sties are sheltered from the sun by grass-thatched roofs sloping back from two or more vertical posts about 6 feet high to similar posts about 4 feet high in the rear. Dug-out troughs of *sal* wood are kept outside or just inside the sties for water and food for the pigs; the commonest food is a mash made from the chaff or husks of *korra* (*kutli*; *Panicum miliaceum*) and

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343 other minor grains. Where timber is not available, these sties are
 • 231 made from bamboos, or even from stones. Similar but, of course,
 far smaller structures are made to serve as hen-coops, resting
 generally against the side or front of the houses.

778 The shrine of the Village Mother, as has been stated above,
 361 is sometimes actually inside the village dormitory, sometimes just
 [824] outside it, and sometimes at a considerable distance from the actual
 village, in a grove, if possible of *saja* (*Terminalia tomentosa*—every-
 where the sacred tree of the Gond) trees. Sometimes there is
 also in the village, often at the end of the street opposite the
 dormitory, the hut-temple of the *pen* or clan-god, containing the
 log-frame image of the god. This will normally be found only in
 the village of the *pen-wadda'i* or priest of the clan-god; but some-
 times, where the villages of the clan are far apart, there may be
 two copies of the clan-god, or the god may go to visit other villages,
 and have a resting-shed in each; or he may have begotten a son
 to deputize for him in the distant village; I have seen in a *pen-rasar*
 (clan-god's temple) both the *pen* himself and an embryo 'son' in
 the second of his three years' 'gestation'. The *pen* is always
 covered by a shed; but the Village Mother sometimes is just a
 cairn or a basket-cylinder filled with stones, or a low table-stone
 at the foot of a *saja* tree, and close by there is a small shed of grass
 thatch with open sides in which are kept the cooking pots, ladles
 and sacrificial knife used at ceremonial feasts. The sacred grove
 may in very rare cases, in villages near the edge of the lowlands,
 have also a hut-temple of Danteshwari Mai or Maolai, the most
 revered or feared Hindu deities of Bastar.

343 There will be found well apart from the houses and the rest of
 841 the village a menstruation hut in many villages, known as *padawo'-*
gda'i to the Hill Marias, or sometimes as *dola-lon*. Here all menstru-
 ating women are secluded from the village for a week every month.
 Sometimes the hut has a single room, about 6 by 5 feet, with walls
 3 feet high, with no windows and only a small door little bigger
 than the entrance to an English kennel; sometimes there are two
 rooms separated from each other by a partition, so that when a girl
 is afraid of being secluded by herself a duenna may sleep within
 sound of her without actual contact. The door of the seclusion
 room always opens away from the village, so that the affected
 woman may get out at night to answer the call of nature without
 overlooking the village or being visible to any villager. Special
 cooking pots and utensils are kept in the seclusion room, or else
 the woman's food is cooked outside and left by her door for her.
 [589] The roof is often covered with seed-bearing twigs of castor-oil plants,
 824] in all parts of India regarded as very efficacious against magic.

[text continues on p.106]

361 The villages being permanent in comparison to the Hill Maria
 364 villages, they are apt naturally to be considerably dirtier, and this is
 177 accentuated by the far larger numbers of cattle and goats that the
 greater wealth of the Bison-horn Marias enables them to keep.
 The houses, too, are far dirtier and more smoke-grimed, though in
 places the Hindu practice of constantly replastering the floors
 with fresh cow-dung is coming in. They are smaller also, as the
 spread of cultivation has restricted the available sources of timber
 and bamboo; but where ample forest is near, the houses are larger,
 and sleeping sheds for the men as well as cattle byres make individual
 homesteads appear larger than the homes of the Hill Marias.

342 The long-houses of the Hill Marias are never seen in the Bison-
 361 horn Maria villages. Individualism is becoming yearly more
 marked among the Bison-horn Marias, and every man likes to have
 his own house and property distinct from his brothers and cousins.
 Their houses, instead of being parallel to the village street are
 generally at right angles to it, and a double row of houses, one on
 each side of the street, is often impossible, because the houses are
 too close to each other to allow each house to have its *bari* (garden
 enclosure) behind it, so that some householders (like those of
 houses B and E in the rough sketch of part of Telam village on page
 121) must have their *bari* opposite them across the street. Each
 [351] *bari* is fenced right round with bamboo wattle-work, so that the
 fences of the *baris* opposite the line of houses appear like a con-
 tinuous wattle-work wall along one side of the street. But there
 may be in the middle of the street occasional granaries or other
 buildings, and the houses are often irregularly scattered about with
 no pretence of formal alignment, so that the ordered arrangement
 of a Hill Maria village is completely absent. There are as many
 • [231] pig-sties in Bison-horn as in Hill Maria villages, but they are far
 less elaborately and adequately constructed, though protected,
 like the Hill Maria sties, by leaning thatches from the sun.

361 The houses of the clan that founded the village are usually all
 together in one group, and there are separate groups for each of
 the clans with which it intermarries.

343 There appears to be no common menstruation hut among
 841 the Bison-horn Marias, nor, indeed, any special menstruation room
 in their houses. A special hut or booth is erected near the house
 for the delivery of a child, and in a few villages near the borders of
 the Hill Maria country there is a hut called the *Piki-kurma* for each
 group of houses, where apparently young girls are segregated for
 their first menstruation; but I noted that I might have misunder-
 stood the information that I was given about this hut, and in
 villages in the heart of the Bison-horn country was definitely told

[Text continues on p. 122]

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241 In his *mudur erka* (big tree *erka*) he raises *chikma* (*Panicum miliare*), *gatha* (*Panicum frumentaceum*) and *sama*, all crops of the first sowing, ripening by early August, and, as main crops, *mandia* (*Eleusine coracana*) which he calls *gurra*, and *kutli*, which he, like the Hill Maria, calls *kohala*, both of which ripen with the *penda kutli* in early December; with him *Eleusine coracana* is an important crop, as he uses it as a principal ingredient in his *landa* intoxicant. In his *marram erka* (brushwood *erka*) he sows only the pulses *urad* (*Phaseolus radiatus*), which he calls *popul*, and *kutli* (*Glycine hispida* and *Dolichos biflorus*) which he calls *koreng*. The 'os *hosra*' millets which the Hill Maria sows as a second crop after the crops reaped in August he calls 'mach *kohala*', and sows not only similarly as a second crop, but also as the main crop in his *erka* land for the third and last year of its cultivation, when it is too exhausted to bear anything else.

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423 Besides the fact observed on page 128 above that, unlike the Hill Maria, he ploughs the ashes, or digs them with his hoe, into his *erka* and *penda* lands, these lands have, therefore, this further great difference from the Hill Maria *penda* lands, that each crop has its own appropriate type of cultivation, and is therefore sown separately, not jumbled up with every other kind of crop in a hopeless welter. He is, moreover, careful to preserve any mango or other fruit trees on his plot. As he retains permanent rights over his plot, whether it is tilth or forest at the moment, he has to be more careful over its boundaries than the Hill Maria, and cannot be content with the temporary sowing of a line of *til* or *roselle*. At each burning, therefore, he spares important trees or stumps at boundary junctions, which he calls *sarkari* or 'authority' trees, and sometimes he leaves a thin line of trees standing along his boundary when he fells the forest. He generally grows his beans and gourds on these and other trees, not on poles stuck up in the middle of other crops like the Hill Maria.

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[417] It has been seen that he has always a *bari* garden enclosure round or near his house in the village, which he calls *lon-welung* or 'house fencing', and generally fences with either bamboo wattlework (*wedur-welung*) or a fence of brushwood tied slantwise between horizontal struts (*jhat-welung*). Here at night he pens his cattle, and the ground is thus richly manured to bear maize (*jonns*), *sarson* or mustard (*tarson*) and tobacco (*pogo*)¹ as essential crops, with in these days frequent patches of *ciuilies*, tomatoes and other vegetables. *Sarson* is the most paying crop exported from Bastar.

¹ The Hill Maria grows tobacco and a few poor *chillies* and tomatoes in little plots left clear of *dab* grasses when *penda* land is useless for grain.

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the seeds are small, shiny and scarlet, with black eyes, and are used as beads in Bastar and many parts of the Central Provinces. For poisoning tiger they 'salt' the flesh of a kill with the poisonous leaves, bark and roots of the shrub *dual bito* (Halbi *bag mohra*; *Alstonia nerifolia*) mixed with quicklime. 411
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C. Domestication of Animals

Pork is a major item in the dietary of Hill and Bison-horn Marias. At the end of marches in the Abujhmar hills I always paid for a pig for the carriers from the preceding camp to roast and eat before dispersing to their villages; and it is sound to provide the Marias or Murias called out for any State work with pork at the beginning and end of the work. The best fattened hog¹ is very cheap and goes a long way. The housing and feeding of pigs have already been described²; cared for in this way, even the domestic India pig is not necessarily the foul worm-ridden pest that he becomes in the low caste quarters of the towns and villages of British India, and in fact in Abujhmar villages his quarters are often cleaner than the houses.

Nearly all young boars are gelded, but a few are left entire for sacrifices in honour of the clan-god and the Village Mother to whom neither Hill nor Bison-horn Maria would offer a hog. The Hill Maria lays the boar on its back, ties its front legs to a post, and stretches out its back legs, while another draws out its penis (*dim*) and crushes its testicles (*merrsheng*) with stones. They say that gelding improves the flavour of pork, and the only boars ever eaten are those sacrificed. A hog is always part of the Hill Maria bride-price. Hill Marias call a hog *badiali padi* or *kuna padi*, and Bison-horn *badiali padi*; boars they respectively call *charhal padi* and *kural padi*. 262
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Cooked pig's lard is kept in many Hill Maria houses as a salve for sore eyes and cuts. 232

They keep numbers of poultry similar in breed and appearance to the red jungle fowl. The Hill Maria's hen-coops have been described on page 104. Cocks and hens are taken to the field houses, and roost there below the sleeping platforms. *Korr-guda*, funnel-shaped nests on bamboo posts about two feet high, are kept in every Hill Maria house, and by many Bison-horn Marias. Jungle cock visit the *penda* plots and fight the domestic cocks in the early morning; the Hill Marias say that if a jungle cock crosses a domestic hen the eggs are not fertile. 235

¹ 'Hog' is used in its technical sense, of a gelded boar.

² See pp. 103 and 120.

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54/ Cock-fighting is the favourite pastime of the Bison-horn Marias, well-known venues being the weekly markets at Kuakonda, Paknar, Kukanar, Bastanar Ghat and near Karli, among several others. They tie iron knives to the cocks' legs. If the cocks break away, their owners pick them up and rub their hackles or spit into their beaks to get their blood up. The defeated cock always becomes the property of the victor's owner. On any market morning you can see scores of Bison-horn Marias walking to market with cocks tucked under their arms. Hill Marias do not themselves go in much for this pastime; only a few of them even stay to watch cock-fighting at Dhaurai market. Some of the Kutru Hill Marias attend cock-fighting every week at Oikal in the Ahiri zamindari of Chanda.

231 Goats are seldom kept by the Hill Marias, though at Nugur in the Indrawati valley the Parilo clan, despite the fact that its totem is the goat, kept goats for the Teli tradesmen who owned the village rice bins described on page 102; but they could not eat goat flesh or even take goat milk.

Among the Bison-horn Marias, many, including even those who belong to the goat phratry and goat clans, keep goats and use goat milk; but totemistic rules prohibit members of goat clans and phratry from eating goat flesh.

231 As has been seen, the Hill Marias are not rich in cattle, do not milk them or yoke them to carts or ploughs, and generally keep Rawat herdsmen to tend them. Nearly all eat beef whenever they can afford it. Bullock or cow-sacrifice is almost an essential part of funeral ceremonies, and all present eat the meat. Dead cattle are divided up and eaten; at Kutru, Hill Marias ate all that remained of a cow killed by a family of man-eating tigers, though the mangled remains had been gnawed by hyaenas and jackals, and exposed to the sun for four or five days till full of flies and maggots. The headmen of the villages of Padalibhum, Tapalibhum, Behramar, Nurbhum and Sonpur Mar *parganas* frankly admitted that they liked eating beef when they could get it; at Handawada, on the other side of the hills, the headmen of the Dantewara Mar and Mangnar *pargana* villages asserted that they never eat dead cattle, and only eat the beef of sacrificed animals. There are practically no buffaloes in the Abujhmar hills.

231 The Bison-horn Marias are great stock-raisers, both of cattle and buffaloes, and they export many head of cattle to Chanda and Raipur, as well as over the Madras border; in fact the land revenue is often paid out of the price received for cattle, and one of their favourite grievances is the cattle export duty of a rupee or two imposed by the State. They use cattle for ploughing and are

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beginning to use carts, but many villages still keep Rawats to tend and milk their cattle and manufacture ghee. They are inveterate eaters of beef, not only at funeral ceremonies or when raising a stone for the dead, but at *pasam* ceremonies, family or clan gatherings, the completion of a new tank and similar occasions. Most villages have a rocky place set apart for skinning and eating cattle. They are reluctant to kill and eat only their own cattle; on the borders of the Jagdalpur Muria country, especially at the time of the *pasam*, they often attempt to steal young heifers or calves from the nearest Muria or non-Muria village: I had once to impose a collective fine on the villagers of Nennor for hiring two men who had been convicted for two or three former thefts to go to the Muria village of Erokot and steal a bullock, which was the mainstay of the Nennor new-eating feast.

Hill and Bison-horn Marias keep tame dogs and cats, and the dogs of the latter are often well-trained hunting dogs who will go with their masters in a beat without giving tongue. Dogs and cats Bison-horn Marias coax a dog to them by calling 'Durro,' *durro* !' and a cat (*pusali*) by 'Mini,' *mini* !' while 'Darra, *darra* !' is used for driving a dog off.

Bison-horn Marias occasionally keep parrots and other *pota* bulbuls, and some of them use hawks for catching quail and other small birds.

D. Fishing

All Marias make their own rods of bamboo and lines of *kosa* silk; the hooks are generally in these days bought in the markets, but occasionally thorns are said to be used. They use rods only in the rains, and bait their hooks with worms or with *kada*, a paste of rice chaff.

The Kuruk or Jaralur are the Maria fishing caste of the big river valleys, speaking the Gondi dialect of the neighbouring villages. The Kuruks of the Indrawati valley from Nelasnar to Bhamragarh are scarcely distinguishable from the Hill Marias in appearance and customs, but the Hill Marias look down on them and do not allow inter-marriage; like those of potters and blacksmiths, their houses are carefully segregated from Maria houses. They maintain ferry services in their dug-out canoes on the Indrawati, and are paid an annual retainer in grain by the Hill Maria villages which frequent Gidam, Nelasnar, Bhairamgarh and Kutru

* I have since heard *Durro* and *Mini* used in the same way not only by Gonds but by Korkus also in the Nishangabad district of the Central Provinces.

SUPPLEMENT

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Little boys practice the bison-horn dance with head-dresses made of bamboo rings which have bamboo 'horns' sticking up in front and at the back a spike ornamented with feathers. They beat their stomachs or use bits of wood instead of drums.

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Page 189, line 31. But I found everywhere that both kinds of Marias were also accustomed to use the fire-drill. The fire-saw of the Hill Marias can easily be worked by two men; there is no difference between it and the Baiga or Juang saw, which is always handled by two persons.

When Bison-horn Marias go to fire their clearings, they should as far as possible approach them with their faces towards the east. The Perma and Gaita break two small branches, the Perma a dry and the Gaita a green or 'living' branch, and drive them into the ground. They light these with a burning log from the Hearth of the Departed in one or other of their houses. If both branches burn well, it is a sign that the clearing also will burn properly; but if one burns and the other does not, it means that the clearing will only burn in patches and will thus be insufficiently manured. Special offerings must then be made.

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Page 225, line 9; page 278, line 25. In one village—but only one—at Mokhpal, I found scepticism about the tradition that the menhirs grow in size. Here the Bison-horn Marias laughed at the idea and said that, if—for example—a stone grew smaller, it was probably because the ground was damp and it sank down.

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Page 225, line 11. The Bison-horn Marias believe that the Dead are reborn, if at all, in their own homes; they generally deny that they ever reappear as animals. Yet an animal may be born in, or have a powerful influence over, a human being. A girl at Mokhpal was born with the left side of her face covered with a sort of fur; the Marias said that an ancestor who was killed by a bear had been reborn in the child. As a result the wearing of dancing-masks covered with bear-fur has been abandoned, for fear that the wearers should be affected in some future birth. A man killed by a tiger may reappear in one of his descendants with marks of the claws on the neck. It may be that to people who live so near to nature rebirth in animal form does not seem specially distasteful. Marias and Murias live close to their animals and love them. At Lakhopal there is a small menhir in memory of a faithful dog.

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Page 227, line 12. In 1939, Soma Ganda-Maria of Gomagal killed a man, who had seduced his wife, in the most brutal manner by squeezing his testicles till they burst. He then seized his penis saying, 'It was with this that you copulated with my wife,' and tore the skin from it. Finally he throttled him. Anyone who

1. Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949

AW32 Gend AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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Bison-horn Maria at Bontamar struggle to get a goat into its shed

[Farrar Elton]

[End Plate L]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Cond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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[Verrier Elton]

Bison-horn Maria
and feeds a parrot
on a bean-vine at
St. Akhpal

[End Plate N]

CHAPTER TWO

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

I. THE MURIA VILLAGE

BEFORE approaching the main subject of this book, it is necessary to see how the chelik and motiari live at home. In a sense, there is no such thing as a typical Muria village any more than there is a typical Muria house. But most of the villages conform to the Gond pattern: they are set among trees—the Muria seem fonder of shade than wind and do not often choose the hill-tops beloved of the Maria and Baiga—and each house is enclosed within a separate fence that also surrounds its garden. There is thus a sharp distinction between a Muria and a Hill Maria village: the latter, like the Baiga village, consists of a row of houses joined together and opening on to a common street. Traces of this survive among the Muria in the enclosures of some of their leading men; at Markabera, for example, the headman's house is like a little village, a long enclosure with a small street on to which face many dwelling-places and granaries. In Palli-Barkot, and other western villages also, groups of related families build their houses to open round a square.

But generally the houses are scattered about, sometimes widely scattered, to suit the lie of the land and the dimensions of the gardens, and a street connects them with each other. There is no sociological significance in the layout of the village; neither the headman's nor the priest's houses nor the ghotul are ever in a special or recognized position.

The houses, nearly always two or three in number round a small courtyard, are built of timber or bamboo plastered with mud and have thatched roofs. As we move east we find the verandahs getting deeper and deeper until in the east of Kondagon the verandah of the main house is often deeper than the room inside. Where houses are built like this, there is no need for special menstruation huts, which are indeed only to be found in the west in the neighbourhood of the Abujmar, where there is no room to seclude a woman on the small verandahs.

To visit a Muria village is to receive a general impression of tidiness and cleanliness, careful industry that exploits to the full the gifts of Mother Earth, and a love of animals. The pigsties are substantial, often with a double roof; the cattle-sheds are sometimes raised on pillars; sitting-beds are given comfortable nests raised well above the ground. The houses themselves are cosy and homely, crammed with every sort of basket, leaf-bundle and utensil. Fish-traps, drums, wooden clogs hang from the roof, and flutes and bows and arrows are stuck under the thatch. Inside, in an inner room, is kept the mysterious Pot of the Departed where the family's ancestors are tended and placated.

These houses are the work-rooms of the chelik and motiari; they are the homes only of the married. The life and interest of chelik and motiari centre in the ghotul. But life there is definitely regarded as a preparation and training for the home. Those who live well and work hard in the dormitories will be good husbands and wives, fathers and mothers later on.

Most of the Muria are undoubtedly very poor. I was one day discussing with W. V. Grigson, who had visited Mandla after several years in Bastar, whether the Bastar villagers were poorer than those in the Central Provinces. I suggested—and he agreed—that probably the Bastar villagers were actually poorer, but that their lives were so much richer that they seemed far more

Plate VIII

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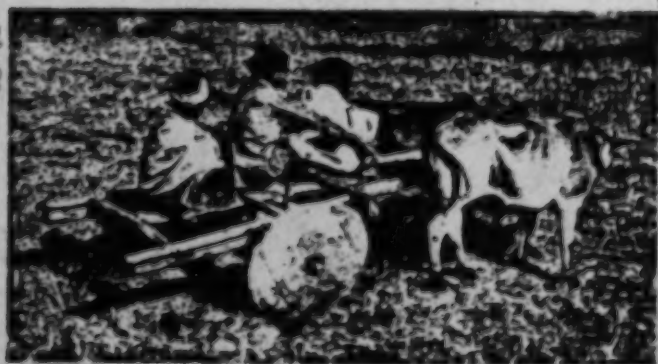


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1. Motari ploughing
at Rayanar

2. Carrying earth to
embank a field

3. Chalik at Sirpur in
solid-wheeled cart

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Plate XIV



The falconer

[p. 52 (v)]

MORAL STANDARDS IN THE GHOTUL

boys and girls. They dance clasped in each other's arms; they go about together, chelik with his arm round the neck of motiari. How revealing are Plates LXXV and XCI. In one a chelik lies on a cot with his arm on his motiari's shoulder, while she sits almost on top of him-making leaves. They were not posed for the photo, and they showed no embarrassment at my approach with the mysterious camera, even though they were from a village I did not know well. In the other Plate two chelik and a motiari are listening to the gramophone outside my tent. They are completely absorbed in it and in each other. One of the boys embraces the girl with both his arms. You would not see this natural innocence in the more 'advanced' parts of aboriginal India.

But this refreshing freedom never degenerates into immodesty in public. It would be unthinkable for a chelik to dance naked—as I have seen older men do—in the presence of women or of his elders. The motiari never indulge in the cheerful vulgarity of the old women at a wedding. A chelik never catches hold of a girl immodestly in general company, though he will embrace her and walk with his arms about her. The great festival dances, though the air is full of romantic suggestion and the older men dance with the greatest license, are conducted by chelik and motiari with complete decorum.

The sympathetic reader will realize how hopeless it is to bring our cut-and-dried judgments of sexual morality to bear upon a situation such as this. But he will also realize that even on his own standards the ghotul cannot be called immoral in the sense that it has no rules or laws or that it ignores those it has. Its regulations are as far-reaching and as strict as our own, and they are often better kept. For the rules are not imposed from without, but have been made by the ghotul-members themselves. Thus they are reasonable, adapted to the actual situation, and so easy to obey.

It is curious that while a Western visitor to a Muria village, if he is of a Puritan turn, will probably be chiefly concerned about the pre-nuptial relations of the children, the Hindu visitor—who is, of course, by far the more frequent—will be scandalized by the casual attitude of the Muria towards cows. Many years ago earnest efforts were made by Hindu reformers in the State to stop cow-sacrifice, and still today—though the majority of State officials preserve an admirable restraint in interfering with tribal customs—landlords, merchants, schoolmasters and travellers do what they can to put an end to the practice. But, except for a few centres where Hindu influence is strong, bulls and cows continue to be sacrificed and eaten all over the northern part of the State. The Muria cannot believe that this is wrong, for the gods demand it. There is nothing in their culture or mythology to forbid it—and indeed we here have a good example of the difficulty of importing a new idea into a system that has no provision for it. Yet if the Muria ever does ponder about 'moral' problems it is this that perplexes him and not any question about pre-nuptial chastity.

Stealing is generally condoned, but it is licensed on some special occasions. The chelik are expected to steal a cock when they take the newly-wedded bride and bridegroom to bed; they appear to have similar licence when they perform ceremonial dances round the village.

The incidence of crime is very low. An experienced police officer, who had served in the ghotul area for twelve years, told me that in all this time there had been no case of murder, riot, assault, hurt, or rape in connexion with the ghotul. There has not been a single case of rape against a Muria, though non-aboriginals have been arrested for raping Muria women. It is a remarkable thing that most of the crime in the Kondagaon and Narayanpur Tahsils occurs

- 345 substantial and carefully tended buildings. Fowls, set in
 ● [23] funnel-shaped bamboo stands, share the house with the human beings.

II

- 241 The Maria's main source of livelihood is agriculture. The ancient and traditional method is axe-cultivation, whereby the people make clearings in the forest with their axes, allow the felled wood to dry, fire it shortly before the rains and then sow the seed in the ashes. Sometimes this is done in the very place where the trees are cut. Sometimes brush-wood is carried to a regular field and spread upon its surface. The Maria, living as they do in settled and often level country, have also many permanent fields which are embanked and
 [312] irrigated by artificial tanks. The Maria are very proud of these tanks, and they are a frequent cause of dispute which sometimes leads to murder. A great part of the Maria's life is necessarily spent in these fields and clearings, and little field-huts and platforms are erected in which whole families camp for weeks at a time watching the crops at night and cooking and doing their work by day. Everybody helps in the work. Beside the family there may be farm-hands, some
 [464] of a special kind such as the Lamhada, who serves for his
 [583] wife instead of paying the bride-price, and the Kabari who is a bond-servant working to repay a loan.¹

- Besides agriculture, the Maria eagerly and successfully exploit the produce of the great forests in which they live.
 [222] There is nothing edible that they will not eat, fruits, roots,
 262 tubers, leaves—they have a profound knowledge of the possibilities of natural produce. They are equally omnivorous in their attitude to meat. In the villages they keep pigs, goats and fowls, and they are fond of pigeons. They still (though they often deny it to outsiders) eat beef on all important and
 224 ceremonial occasions. Rats, squirrels and small birds are caught by the children and roasted and eaten with delight.

¹ The Kabari system, which is similar to what is called Bhagela in Hyderabad, Kamiasti in Bihar, and Gothi in Orissa and Madras, is open to grave abuses—men working a whole life-time to settle a debt which is not settled even by death, but descends to the sons—and is now controlled by the State.